

# 'My Mother Loved Hall Out of Pity for His Soul, Starving Like Hers'

*"He Called Himself Coward for Wedding to Benefit His Kin"*

Mrs. Eleanor Mills, ambitious wife of a poor church sexton, loved the Rev. Edward W. Hall, husband of a wealthy woman many years his senior. They loved each other illicitly according to the law of man, but is the law of love a higher law than the law of man? They paid a terrible price, these two for their moments of happiness. Their mortal love was ended by a murderer's gun one night four years ago as they kept tryst on a lonely New Jersey farm.

Now, Charlotte Mills, daughter of the slain woman, her lips unsealed by the unbearable weight of her suffering, tells for the first time the strange course of that strange romance, and reveals the inevitable life forces which drew these two-lovers together.

## MY OWN STORY of My Mother's Love and Murder

BY

*Charlotte Mills*

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**D**URING those days—about a year, say, before mother and Mr. Hall were killed—I found myself thinking a good deal about their love for each other. The more I thought about it, the less I could see it was wrong.

The reason people say terrible and cruel things in a case like that is because they don't see down under the surface. If you should see a woman who is married kissing a man who is not her husband, right away you say:—

"Brazen thing! She ought to be ashamed of herself."

Or something like that, anyhow. Perhaps, if you knew her life, her disappointments and unhappiness, all her hardships and trials, and also if you knew her sincerity—that the kiss wasn't just a cheap thing like part of a flirtation—you would see it all in a different light. You would feel sympathetic to those lovers, and be glad they had the love.

Isn't it right to expect a little happiness? If a woman is good and hard-working and kind to people and does her best in everything, and has a deep religion and gives herself to it all she can, shouldn't she be given some chance to live? Is it wicked to love some one, even if the some one belongs to some one else by law? And if it is wicked, how can you help it anyhow?

### Pleads for Leniency

I never could get through my head why people say that love is the greatest thing in the world, and yet are so hard on people who love. Either they ought NOT to say love is the strongest and grandest and most beautiful thing, or else they should be more lenient about it, and forgive people when they really do love.

Many a person commits a crime, kills some one, even, and isn't punished for it. And others are murdered just because they loved somebody they could not help loving.

My brain gets numb sometimes, just trying to think it out. I read the newspapers and see

the stories by hundreds, of rich people who don't love the men or women they are married to, and get divorced and marry again, this time to somebody they do love. Is that considered disgraceful? It certainly is not. But when somebody poor does it, or wants to do it, they are scoffed at and sneered at, and worse.

### Believes Widow Knew

When this awful thing happened four years ago, and I used to read Mrs. Hall's statements that he didn't know anything was going on between her husband and my mother, and that her husband's love was the most beautiful thing in her life, it just took away my breath. No woman could possibly be married to a man for all those years and not know he doesn't love her.

If he loves some one else the wife must know that too. She MUST. Nothing else is possible.

To this day, when the statements come out at the hearings and investigations, that Mrs. Hall had no idea Mr. Hall "had any particular interest in the choir singer" it is like knives in my flesh. I don't know how to express myself, but it is like denying something that is perfectly beautiful just because you can't have it yourself. Or like tearing something to pieces because you



Charlotte Mills, pawn of fate in the grim tragedy that left her bereaved of the mother she loved.

don't want it, and so nobody else can have it.

I am no paragon and neither was mother; she never set herself up to be. But if I knew my husband didn't love me and never had, and if I thought he cared for somebody else who cared for him, I would never try to hold him, or chain him to me. I wouldn't want him that way. It would seem terrible—undignified, and even ungraceful. My mother would have felt the same way.

### Why Hall Married

Now I happen to know how Mr. Hall came to marry. He was simply pushed into it because he had his people to provide for, and they were the kind that needed many things, and he had nothing except what he earned as a minister, and everybody knows that isn't much.

He wanted to be free; he didn't want to marry, because there was nobody he loved. But they argued and urged and pleaded and at last induced him to do it for their sakes, and he couldn't see any way out.

Remember, I was my mother's confidante, and when she couldn't keep some of the things Mr. Hall told her bottled up any longer, she used to open her heart to me a little. She never said an un-

kind word about the Hall family or the woman he married, or blamed her for marrying a man she knew didn't love her.

Mother felt sorry for him and for them and for her. She learned from him what a starved life he had. She knew all about starved lives herself, poor mother. And she pitied him from her heart.

Well—so they were married, Mr. Hall and Miss Frances Noel Stevens, middle-aged daughter of an exclusive, wealthy family that has always been about the most powerful one, I guess, in this part of New Jersey. They went to Europe on their honeymoon trip.

### Hall's Mental Agony

The night of the day they were married, Mr. Hall went and stood alone on the dark deck of the ship and realized what it all meant.

HE CLENCHED HIS HANDS AND STARED UP AT THE BLACK SKY AND CALLED HIMSELF COWARD. A COWARD FOR BEING LED INTO A THING HE OUGHT NOT TO HAVE DONE, FOR THE SAKE OF PEOPLE WHO WOULD BENEFIT BY IT.

He knew it was not fair to himself or to his wife. But he knew, now that he had done it,

that he must go through with it in the best way he could, and be as nice to her as he knew how, and try never to show her it was hard for him.

I guess when all is said and done, it was just about as hard for her. But she is a different type—colder, self-absorbed, not interested in any people that are different from her kind.

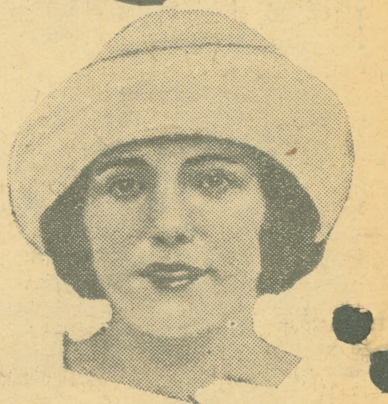
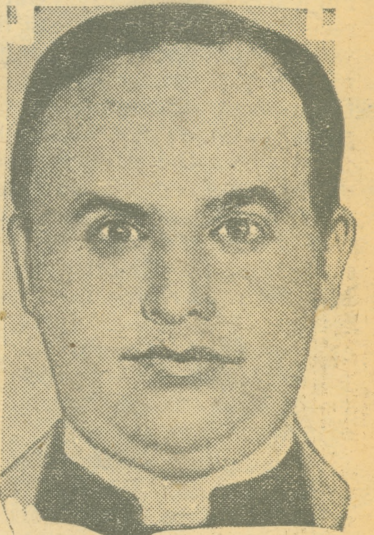
I have often wondered how they really got along together, being so extremely opposite, as opposite as two people could be. I suppose they had one thing in common, religion. But they followed it in such different ways.

Mr. Hall's way was to get right down and like people and be jolly with them, and be natural. He was like a big boy.

Mrs. Hall's way was like the etiquette books. Formal and distant and proper.

I always used to think society people were forever watching themselves and trying to imitate something, never doing things because they wanted to do them, but just because it was considered the thing to do. But probably that is their way, as the other way is our way. And each one is natural to the person that does it.

Anyhow, this much I know—that Mr. Hall was OUR KIND. It always seemed to me he



Love spelled death for Mrs. Eleanor Mills and the Rev. Edward W. Hall, both shown above.

must hate being followed and told to put his rubbers on, or wear a muffler, and do this and do that, and see this person and go to that card party or reception. He never resented it, though.

He was a good man. And my mother was a good woman.

(Monday—Charlotte Mills describes how the Rev. Mr. Hall used to leave the great fine house presided over by his stern wife to come to little informal "parties" at the drab Mills home. Here is an installment teeming with heart throbs and the deeps of human emotions.)